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AUTHOR Burd, Gene
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ABSTRACT

In addition to investigative and interpretative reporting, journalists might adopt a new approach to the news--preventive journalism. Preventive journalism would concentrate on news and information that could be used to prevent crises and conditions upon which the mass media thrive. In one area, public health, preventive journalism could be used to emphasize ways to prevent ill health, causes of various health problems, and ways to prevent the costs of dealing with these problems after they become crises. To determine if this preventive approach to health news coverage was being used, a content analysis was conducted of nine issues of a large daily Texas newspaper. The results showed that health news stories usually dealt with the odd, the spectacular, and conflict and controversy. In addition, health related stories seldom appeared on the first page of the newspaper, indicating that a preventive attitude was not yet visible in news reporting. (FL)

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MC&S DIVISION

PRESS RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEALTH NEWS: BEYOND PRECISION AND TOWARD PREVENTION

By

Gene Burd
Associate Professor

Department of Journalism
University of Texas

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Introduction

The recent adoption of social science research methods for teaching "precision journalism"[1] represents a third major evolutionary step in teaching journalistic reporting. It follows the second state of "interpretative reporting" begun in 1932 and extending to 1977; and that was preceded by the "primitive journalism" of the "five w's" (who, what, when, where and why), and their related instinctive guideline of the "nose for news" and the inverted pyramid style.[2]

"Precision journalism", or "PJ", as it is now known in journalism education circles, borrows the social scientists' tools such as polls, statistics, computers, surveys and experiments. "Interpretative reporting" dwelled more on the "why" and extended into the "how" of news events into specialties such as crime (beyond mere police reporting), politics (beyond mere government coverage), and into business, finance, labor, religion and science.

Various refinements and extensions and mixtures of the two approaches have appeared in "public affairs" reporting with greater emphasis on courts and use of public records;[3] greater "in-depth" reporting and more recently, the emphasis on governmental wrong-doing and special reportorial techniques to get "inside"

in the form of "investigative reporting".[4] One refinement of "precision", "interpretative" and "investigative" approaches was to add participant observation and use of social indicators.[5]

A fourth possible innovation stage could be the use of urban community functions to replace the building and place orientation of news gathering first suggested in the 1960s,[6] and combined with the borrowed notions of systems analysis and the concepts in preventive and holistic medicine.[7] This would invoice possible new definitions of community and communications[8] and the notion that journalism and communications would not be separated from people, but they would be participants with greater control over their communications system, as preventive and holistic medicine encourages for physical health.

"PJ-3" might well follow the earlier "primitive" and "precision" models by adding "preventive journalism". It would concentrate on news and information that could be used to prevent crises and conditions upon which the mass media thrive. News would be "nutrition" to prevent the "disease" of violence and confrontation, and the "illness" and "autopsy", which so often still define traditional news concepts in the primitive news story formula: "How many dead tells the story?" Indeed, the ultimate news beat in the traditional sense, is the end of the world, which is frequently a first mock story for journalism students to write. News is defined as death and disaster, breakdown and collapse, whether in the form of obituaries (the model for the basic news story), or in auto accidents or wars.

Since the honored "estates" nourish and thrive on crime (the law); on fear (the church); and on disease (the doctors), need it follow that a "fourth estate" prosper on communication overload and cataclysm? "Preventive journalism" would encourage more feedback (as in biofeedback), greater autonomy of individuals and community (as in self-healing), and emphasis on the surveillance and "DEW" (distant-early-warning) capacities of the media to prevent future problems.

"PJ-3" would utilize the process of urbanization to re-organize newsrooms and news-gathering techniques; and to explain and interpret the news. Basic urban, community functions like structure, design, transportation, economic base, human relations, political order, health, leisure, information-education, and the natural environment would be used as a perspective to select and interpret news, and to sharpen editorial perception and skills.

Concept for Consumers

The focus of preventive journalism would be to identify issues and problems before they become crises, which are then considered news. Readers would be provided with information to resolve conflicts and disputes and dilemmas before they become mere news autopsies. In a word, if preventive journalism works, then journalism which exploits would eventually go out of business, although that is about as likely as the end of sin and disease for the other professions.

This idea involves changing several perspectives in journalism. It would mean a shift in focus and emphasis form a "nose for news" to a "head for news", as journalists would know subjects better, as well as techniques. Reporters would be trained to discover rather than to record the obvious; to be civic detectives, critics and experts involved in civic detection, rather than civic clerks taking dictation.

Journalists still take a perspective from authority at the top, and have done so until "consumers" (of goods via ads) demanded accountability on the use and realiability of the product and information delivered. Signs of citizen and consumer feedback would be encouraged and cultivated as reporters assessed the performance of public and social services with "report-card" reporting and anticipatory journalism, in which the media would become more conscious of the impact and consequences of information and accept that social responsibility that comes with the distribution of media content.

Too often journalists think their repsonsibility ends with their service as a chronicler and community bulletin board. Frequently, the main press duty is seen as merely the exercise of the mechanics and folk wisdom of media--being watchdog (or mad dog) at city hall and posing as a disinterested, objective observer, despite the power of the press as a power participant and agenda-setter in the community.

In this respect, citizens might be informed more about how the media establishment relates to both news and community functions, just as consumer-wise citizens now more fully understand how the medical, legal and religious professions inter-link self and public interests. The potential in this area seems boundless in the functional areas already cited: how the press covers transportation and promotes freeways which are essential to reporters' commuting and delivery of newspapers; how the media are pollutants through waste paper and communications overload in general; how conflict among minorities and the majority creates saleable conflict news; how media intself is tied to the entertainment it publicizes and to the government of which it is sometimes a part.

Preventive journalism could help people understand that the media are a part of the system and not beyond their control or contact. As long as mass media messages flow in one direction from authority and power, the mass of people are vulnerable to manipulation and are acted upon as consumers of a mass-produced product rather than as producers of their own communications content. "Do-it-yourself" media attempts are signs of the approach of preventive journalism. The rise of alternative media, the reaction against "mass-comm", and the emergence of localism are potential threats to the power of the mass market.

Related to this is a needed change in focus from media boosting of the quantity of life to the quality of life. "Bigger is better", "more is good", and the role of the press as a local chamber of commerce should be changed to media concern with the implications of growth, the trade-offs and costs of

development, the needs of people as compared to the notions of producers, and the possible alternatives. Much of the information in mass media is a narcotic turning audiences and readers into vicarious participants outside any real community upon which they might have impact.

Change Mental Focus

Preventive journalism would not eradicate or disregard most traditional mechanical techniques, tricks or tips, but would use them in new and imaginative ways to change the mental focus of journalists. In the older, primitive journalism, the exercise of the trade, the beat as a place, and the event as the happening, all placed emphasis on the media themselves and sources and the producers of content. In preventive journalism, the perspective would be on issues and functions, not on place; on processes and problems, rather than on mere events; on substance and content of news rather than on sources; and on those who receive rather than on those who send it out.

Essential to the concept of "PJ-3" is the idea that news must not obscure the truth; news must make sense and be usuable; and the people must be provided with not only alternatives, but possible solutions, and the chance to match and compare the media's picture of their world with their own experience. To bridge this gap, reporters should be trained to know subjects as much as techniques and to rely less on the truth of "He said it", and more on "These are the facts and the truth as I have discovered them".

The continued isolation of the journalist from the reality of community for readers and viewers must be discouraged. The White House and Big Cities may be the place for power and specialization and success for the professional media, but the public in the hinterland may be neglected. As in medicine, religion and the law, the needs of the profession may not coincide with the needs of those presumably served. The whole individual in a whole community may be

forgotten and natural body defenses may be lost as readers know of far-away places and remain helpless. The knowledge of local community may be limited despite the chance to use and act upon that information. Problems may be solved from a distance, but as in homeopathy, the media might note that the challenge for preventive journalism is the patient, not the cure from outside.[9]

The volume of mass media content may not enhance knowledge of the problems involved (as some might say of Vietnam and Watergate), but preventive journalism aimed at the personalized, humanistic needs of people might both increase knowledge and help solve problems. Somehow, the vast technology of media and even the more sophisticated social science techniques alone may not create the communications community needed unless news values come out of community tissues and issues.

Since the possibility and desirability of a perfect communications science is open to question, the several functional systems of a community may serve as a theory of community. The crucial problem is how to get the mass and specialized media to fully represent the pluralistic and multi-centered community of interests. In this repect, there is a need for a re-focus on the image of community from downtowns to other competing centers; a need for more information before decisions are made on community problems; and press revelation of what others have tried, what has failed and what succeeded in cases and experiments.

News departmentalization might be tried in the functional areas, with proper balance for news content which crosses divisions and that news which is of general public interest. Although sports and civic booster imagery provide much of this today, a new common community of interest might be cultivated and developed. The dangers of specialized departments exist, but as in medicine, the "gp" or general assignment journalist would still serve a purpose as long as he is aware of the needs for specialization in both content and types of community.

Preventive journalism would be marked by more use of critics of community development; greater use of series and sections and special pages on community problems and functions. Journalists would be expected to "know" before writing, rather than depend on operation of journalistic techniques to automatically reveal issues. A theory of community, like a theory of the body, would precede observation.

The need for this additional "PJ-3" stage is partly due to the other stages being somewhat technique-oriented. Social science and investigative skills are essential to the diagnosis, but the prognosis may require a knowledge and comprehension of the total organism. All the focus on the competent collection of information cannot bring life to a community any more than can life-support medical systems when the brain dies in the body.

Training Before Practice

Are communities supplied with information to prevent deterioration and death? What signs are there of evidence that preventive journalism is being taught in journalism education or being practiced in the journalistic profession?

A look at how news of health and nutrition is covered might be a logical place to detect any analogy, metaphor or usage of preventive health and preventive medicine techniques.

Journalism educators concerned about preparing journalists for health communication might be reminded that few journalism schools emphasize medical and health journalism,[10] although medical writers organized nearly 30 years ago,[11] that science writing developed in the 1920's,[12] and a recent survey of 109 daily newspapers in the 75 most populated U.S. metropolitan areas found that 96% of the papers have one reporter who covers health and medicine either full or part-time.[13]

Before any evaluation of how the press covers health, it might be useful to examine how teachers train journalists in this area. Journalism teachers seeking texts with guidance in this specialty will find that advice on how to report health has not changed much from the texts of 30 or more years ago.[14]

Basic texts especially still emphasize illness, deaths, and accidents rather than health, and obituaries and hospital beats are used as tools for training general reporters and as a source and supply of news. Texts dwell on which phrases to use for causes of death (from, of, or after); the wording for the extent of illness (brief or lengthy); and the social taboos on mention of venereal disease, cancer, mental illness and suicide.[15]

Young reporters are taught the mentality of the building-place and disaster beat--events rather than issues.[16] One textbook writer admits that the police, fire and hospital beats are "ignoring the narrow fields", but argues that "People are interested in 'trouble'--deaths, destruction, crimes, fires, explosions, crashes. . .Such events make news because we are accustomed to normalcy, and--thank heaven--disasters are the exception rather than the rule."[17]

On health, one leading text suggests "intensity" (death) and "extensity" (numbers who die) as "factors of magnitude" in selecting news. ("How many dead tells the story", is an ancient newsroom maxim.) The same authors note under their category of "Illness, Deaths, Funerals" that news is "heightened by prominence, novelty, consequence, human interests and even conflict".[18]

Even the more advanced, interpretative, in-depth texts place health in the context of spot news on police and hospital beats, which means "other reporters obtain feature stories...about interesting operations and treatments and about remedies developed by the research of physicians..."[19] The leading interpretative reporting text of the last half-century places health under "Illness and Death" along with obituaries, suicides, accidents and disasters. It does caution against medical sensationalism and calls for qualified mental

health reporters and medical columns by experts, but health is not under science, which includes weather, energy, space and the natural environment.[20] The press is seen as a mere conduit for medical authorities. Thus, "Newspapers provide the medium whereby health officials advise the public on such matters as threats to purity of the water supply, probable heat prostration and the presence of epidemic diseases"...since readers "appreciate being warned of the dangers.[21]

There are signs of hope for training medical and health journalists. While one new text suggests that obituaries emphasize the cause of death if it is accidental, but emphasize the person's background if the death is of an aged or ill person, the text does embrace "consumer reporting". It urges coverage of the actions of regulatory agencies, e.g. health departments' ratings on clean restaurants, other marketplace practices, "service reporting" (helping people buy); and "critical reporting" (assessment of their purchases).[22]

One recent text urges that social science techniques, participant-observer, and health record analysis be all used to improve coverage of community health.[23] The most progressive advancement in training in this health specialty comes in a text suggesting that medical reporting move far beyond mere reports on patient conditions, hospital and other health organizations activity, and advancements in health and science.[24]

In the two areas of science and medical reporting and that of mental health and social welfare, they suggest six duties[25] for what might be called the health writer:

1) Pragmatic advice about everyday life.
2) Guidance on public issues.
3) Help in evaluating the relationship betweeen science, technology and society.
4) Help the public know and understand human services and how they can be utilized.
5) Examination of the performance of officials responsible for those services.
6) Utilization of the content of the health field to cover larger social problems.

These six standards appear useful to evaluate press coverage of health and nutrition.

Another set of standards for assessing media performance in this subject area is provided by looking at content to see if it can be categorized by traditional treatment of medical news:[26]

1) Elaborate, "gee whiz" accounts of spectacular discoveries and dramatic new surgical techniques and incipient new cures.

2) Medical and health oddities, "man bites dog" and "whew" news.

3) Controversies, costs, conflicts over money, malpractice, wages of hospital personnel, illegalities, crises of epidemics.

Stories that deal with preventive medicine and the underlying problems of public health tend to be rare,[27] and practical, pragmatic everyday advice on how to prevent ill health is less common than news of an ex post facto nature. The focus of such "preventive journalism" could be press emphasis on causes of problems, on ways to prevent the costs of dealing with problems after they become crises, and on the supply of information for readers, viewers and listeners so that they can use it to solve their own problems rather than have the media cover them afterward.[28]

Purpose and Method of Study

This study is an attempt to examine health coverage in a large metropolitan community where there is extensive medical specialization in the health community and where the size of the media would likely support specialized coverage.

It was decided to use a Texas newspaper in one of its large cities since a survey of medical reporting on state dailies revealed that two-thirds of 13 dailies responding have a staff medical reporter. Five of the eight spend 100% of their time on health, and of those, two are in Houston, the state's largest city and location of its major medical facilities, and home of the state's largest daily, the Houston Chronicle.[29]

The year of 1979 was chosen as the time to monitor the newspaper. A period was picked in between two major reports on health. One was a May 1 study on social disintegration in Houston's mental health indicating a "nervous breakdown."[30] Another was an end of July release of "The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention", which the Chronicle itself said had indicated that Americans "are killing themselves needlessly through smoking, drinking, poor diet and preventable accidents".[31]

The study suggested six ways Americans could improve their health: "Elimination of cigarette smoking, reduction of alcohol misuse, reductions in excess calories, periodic tests for major disorders, and adherence to speed laws and of seatbelts."[32] It has been urged that the media be monitored to see if they are providing individuals information to help them solve such problems before they need expensive care from government or private medical programs.[33]

The month of July 1979 was chosen for study of the Chronicle. The Sunday issues (400,679 circ.) and the Thursday issues (317,324) were considered suitable because there is more likely space for stories beyond spot news, and reader time to reflect on health matters on a weekend and on Thursdays when the paper publishes food sections when grocery ads are carried.

All health news content in nine issues (5 Sunday and 4 Thursday) was clipped and categorized to see if it fit into one of the three categories: 1) Spectacular/"Gee Whiz" news; 2) Oddities of medicine and health; and 3) Controversies/conflict/crises. What did not fit was to be the unlikely or less likely "preventive journalism" of information useful to readers. That possible category was set up as one suggested for good medical writing under "Pragmatic advice about everyday life".

Findings

Page One was not used extensively to set a major health agenda. (TABLE I) Four of the nine issues had nothing on health. Two had very short news items

and two published large "gee whiz" photos on medical spectaculars. The one near substantive story on pollution appeared to be a form of civic boosterism.

TABLE I

(THE HEALTH AGENDA ON PAGE ONE)

July 1: Nothing on health.
July 5: Only small 1-col. story quoting Miami psychiatrist saying: "Gas Crisis is Accused of Driving People Crazy."
July 8: Nothing on health.
July 12: Large Upper Left, 7 by 4½ photo of 3-year-old Minneapolis girl discharged from hospital after liver transplant.
July 15: Two-col. 15-inch (jump) story on "Scientists Say Refinery Pollution May Be Good Thing", based on Department of Commerce study that found smog can cause rain.
July 19: Large photo of rare "miracle baby" born in Chapel Hill, N.C. after development outside womb.
July 22: Small 5¼-inch story on how Congressional messages in gyms are costing taxpayers $200,000 per year.
July 26: Nothing on health.
July 29: Nothing on health.

While most of the content in the period studies (TABLE II) dealt with the spectacular and odd in medicine and health, and conflict and controversy news received much attention, preventive and pragmatic information and advice received 17.8% of the stories and 15.2% of the total column inches. (The first two categories were combined because of the persuasive tone of their content, with controversial news and the third (preventive) unexpected category added.)

In all, 146 stories and 39 pictues were published, with 2,168 column inches. Of that, 62 stories (42.5%) and 1,201 column inches (55.6%) want to the spectacular-gee whiz category; and 58 stories (39.7%) and 632 column inches (29.2%) was on controversy and conflict. In number of stories and column inches, the first category in order was research, health workers, surviving aged and rare diseases. (See TABLE III).

In news of conflict and controversy, the bulk of stories and column inches was devoted, in order to: mental illness and stress, financial illegalities in

medicine and health, disease and epidemics, rulings of administrative and legal bodies, court action and violence. (See TABLE IV).

TABLE II

(CATEGORIES, STORIES, COLUMN INCHES)

Topics:	Stories: (N=146)	Col. Inches: (2,168)	News (1,649)	Photos (N=39)	Space: (Av. 15 in.)
Spectacular/"Gee Whiz" Medical/Health Oddities	62 (42.5%)	1,201½ (55.6%)	87½	33½ (23)	20
Research:	31	445	412	33 (1)	15
Health Workers:	10	422	272	150½ (13)	18½
Aged Survival:	10	246	138	108½ (6)	15
Rare Surgery/ Disease:	11	88½	49½	39½ (3)	8
Controversy/Conflict/ Crises	58 (39.7%)	632½ (29.2%)	530½	101½ (11)	12
Mental Illness/ Stress:	14	265	219	46 (5)	14
Money/Illegalities:	11	132	115	17 (3)	10
Disease/Epidemics:	8	129½	91	38½ (3)	12
Adm./Leg/Rulings:	14	62½	62½	0	4
Court Action:	6	22½	22½	0	3½
Violence:	5	21½	21½	0	4
Preventive/Pragmatic Advice	26 (17.8%)	325 (15.2%)	296	29 (5)	12½

(See text after Table IV)

Since it was found that a considerable amount (17.8%) of the stories and almost as great a percentage (15.2%) of the column inches were devoted to preventive/pragmatic advice, it was decided to concentrate on that unexpected finding for the balance of this report and to delay any extensive analysis of the other expected findings (spectacular and controversial) except for the following topical summaries in Tables III and IV.

TABLE III

(Summary of SPECTACULAR/GEE WHIZ/ODDITIES)
No. Stories: 62 (42.5%) Col. Ins: 1,201 (55.6%)

Research (31 stories; 445 col. inches)

Most stories showed a strong emphasis on the odd, the peculiar, humorous, and on sex: "monkey business" as chimpanzees are used in hepatitis research and court suit results from their transfer; "Study Shows Gonorrhea Danger From Toilet Seat"; "Pot may help some cancer patients"; "Vasectomies May Limit Risk of Cervical Cancer"; women's sex organs may restrict jogging; pregnant Army women problem; natural birth after Caesarian?; re-cycled umbilical cords for legs; sex chromosomes and male retardation; human whiskers used to probe nutrition; carcinogens in cosmetics; menningitis may be contagious; possible vaccine for tooth decay; drugs for curing Hodgkins disease; balloons for clogged heart arteries; links between health and inborn personality traits; mothers/fathers drinking/smoking can affect born and unborn.

Health Workers (10 stories; 422 col. inches)

Mostly personality sketches on medical and health personnel, counselor helps nurses/doctors deal with deaths; students aid ill in Latin America; women doctors, hospital volunteers, para-surgery nurse, head of U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Aged/Survival (10 stories; 246 col. inches)

Florida man, 137 years old; woman loses, regains sight; 500-lb. man battles obesity; English woman, 100, takes first airplaine ride; feature story on World War II POW nurse, 70; fighting Illinois newspaper editor, 60; Col. Sanders (Kentucky Fried Chicken) fights birth defects in U.S. @ 88; and 114-yr-old Tokyo man has no aches or pains and "'drinks about a half-pint of spirits every night.'"

Rare Diseases/Surgery (11 stories; 88¼ col. inches)

Surgeons try to re-attach a hand, two feet, four fingers; remove nail from brain; perform urinary by-pass; girl survives malformed heart; boy with rare kidney disease treated with experimental drug.

Although many of the above stories contained implied and implicit advice and tips on health, they were not considered in the preventive journalism category because of their emphasis on the person and event rather than upon the significance of issues.

(Ironically, a small story July 26, wedged between ads for chicken fried steak, cocktail mix and an ad for treating alcohol addiction, reported that one

study found that there was a "Decline Seen in Quality of Research in Medicine", because of the pressure of "publish or perish" for large quantities of reports, often quickly published without verified and accurate findings.)

TABLE IV

(Summary of CONTROVERSY/CONFLICT/CRISES)
No. Stories: 58 (39.7%) Col. Ins: 632 (29.2%)

Mental Illness/Stress (14 stories; 265 col. ins.)
Family breakdown, divorce, runaways, suicides, illegitimacy, abortion, adoption, battered children and parents, drug, alcohol abuse, post-Vietnam syndrome.

Money/Illegalities (11 stories; 132 col. ins.)
Houston hospitals seek government permit to exceed wage guidelines; TV program on aged accused of distortions; Texas child care homes investigated; government to require priests to pay maternity coverage, arrest consumer affairs commissioner for speeding.

Disease/Epidemics (8 stories; 129 col. ins.)
Some preventive health information supplied on communicable diseases via vaccination against polio, measles, mumps, diptheria etc., but most of content was on the crisis of health rather than its cure, e.g. a 30-inch story on rabies July 15 with mention of need for vaccination; and a historical profile July 22 of a local physician who recalled polio epidemic as Amish objected to vaccine in N.E. part of U.S. Small wire stories on histoplamosis in Indiana and bubonic plague in San Diego appeared, but a 66-inch story on Houston fleas pertained mainly to spraying pets, and casually mentioned that fleas could carry the plague.

Administrative Rulings (14 stories; 62 col. ins.)
FTC approves more detailed warning labels on clothing; FDA proposes pamphlet warning on side effects of drugs prescribed; Consumer Product Safety Commission confirms asbestos in hair dryers; Transportation Dept. won't interfere with air bags and seal belts; Agriculture Dept. to ban junk food before school lunches; State Dept. may add odor to pot herbicide to warn users; Ice cream ingredients must be on labels; House committee hears ozone hazard on planes; HEW cuts welfare losses; Army reports shipped equipment was radioactive; General Accounting Office says imported food has pesticide residue.

Court Action (6 stories; 22 col. ins.)
Suits against doctors for births after vasectomy and after abortion; suit dismissed on pre-sweetened cereals causing poor nutrition and tooth decay; court awards $3.8 million malpractice payment to retarded boy; Judge sentences two women for food stamp scheme; congress may ease food stamp cutbacks; Judge rules 150 wives can join asbestos suit re lung disease of husbands; London doctor who prescribed chocolate cookies to dietary patient must himself pay for $1.80 cookies.

Violence (5 stories; 21 col. ins.)
Woman sues psychiatrist who failed to keep her from killing; chiropractor saves accident victim; Rhodesian troops kill Italian missionary doctor; ex-New York cop tries to kill pharmacist.

Preventive/Pragmatic Advice

Of 26 preventive journalism stories (17.8%) and 325 column inches (15.2%), 19 were non-local and non-staff written, mostly wire copy and syndicated health columnists. Most of the advice was in back sections of the papers studied, with only two stories appearing before the seventh section, due in part to the fact that "Lifestyle" and soft news sections are nearer the back. Most all were in the upper half of pages, and the total bulk of preventive material was exceeded only by the content for news on health research and extensive features on health workers and personnel.

Physical advice columns by Josephone Lowman on "Why Grow Old" and "Shape Up" concentrated on the physical appearance (slim waist, abdomen, contoured legs etc. rather than on the health value of exercises. However, readers were invited to mail in questions for more information). A similar column on "The Latest Looks" by Jennifer Anderson dwelled on appearance resulting from dieting rather than on health per se.

Much of the syndicated columnists' material was sandwiched among "Lifestyle" ads for improved physical beauty in hair, skin, fashion and jewelry. Similarly, the Chronicle's "Consumer News" pages dealt primarily with problems of money, savings, retirement, finding gas, selecting tires, cleaning jewelry, preventing crime and burglaries.

The lack of emphasis on health in the "Lifestyle" sections and in the stories listed in the category is illustrated by a July 1 story ("Acne Can Be Conquered, Says Doctor Turned Author"), in which a dermatologist on a book promotion tour says that "chocolate, greasy foods, colas etc. do not cause acne", and he advises chemical treatment and reading of his book.

Also on July 1, a half-page locally-written feature on "Can You Cope if Your Child Has Temper Tantrum in the Grocery Store Aisle"?, does not accent food content, but, instead concludes that "Parents can view the grocery store

trip as a chance to learn about politeness, social interchange and awareness of other people's rights."

Information on how to deal with mental problems was included in two columns by Dr. Saul Kapel on "Coping With Kids", in which he gave advice to mothers with hyperactive children, and a column which told how "Marijuana has disastrous (physical and psychological) consequence". (Columns by Ann Landers were not included because they tend to be presented as entertainment, and apocryphal in appearance in many cases.)

The newspaper published several small 1-3-inch stories on meetings upcoming on weight reduction, blood donations, healing, exercises and Parkinson's disease, but outside that, the most substantively useful material came from syndicated writer Jane E. Brody. Writing for the New York Times news service, she discussed in lengthy 18 and 24-inch stories on July 1 and 15, the dangers of excessive salt intake in the diet, and how to deal with diarrhea in Mexico ("Montezuma's Revenge").

Perhaps more thorough and useful were lengthy excerpts from the book by Nathan Pritkin and Patrick McGrady on The Pritkin Program, a book which has outsold any health book in history, and is very critical of media for impeding, rather than helping, public understanding of the issues of disease and treatment. Their two re-printed pieces covered the need to restrict salt in the body and how exercise rejuvenates and strengthens the body.

The Thursday Food Sections were largely advertising supplements, with news stories (like the ads) emphasizing food prices, quality, convenience, appeal, appearance, and taste rather than nutritional value. The outstanding examples and exceptions to that rule were four columns submitted by the South Texas Dietetic Association. They included nearly 50 inches of copy on "Cast Wary Eye on Caffeine Intake", "Alcohol Causes Nutrition Problems", "Food Poisoning: A Hazard in Summer", and a column checklist on whether a diet is safe and effective.

Few lengthy news stories on food appeared in regular columns. One striking exception was an 18-inch story July 1 reporting on studies at the National Institute on Aging. It was headed "Pleasantly Plump Possibilities--RESEARCHER SAYS FAT MAY HELP PEOPLE LIVE LONGER". Such "man bites dog" editorial displays on health were probably not changed by the sole editorial page column in the period of nine issues by syndicated columnist James Kilpatrick (July 22) who criticized federal restrictions on public school sales of junk food as "Paths of Righteousness Lead But to Spinach".

Kilpatrick called the ban on chewing gum, snow cones, sour balls, candy sticks, jelly beans, gum drops and lollipops (he said) as "Pearl Harbor for the Mooey-Gooey-Wooey Bar", and an "abuse of the powers of government in a free society". Of Carol Foreman, assistant secretary of consumer and food services in the Agriculture Department, he asked "Leave us alone, Big Sister! Leave us alone!" (The Chronicle reported July 19: Milwaukee "Zoo Officially Prohibits Junk Food for Animals". In the same issue a former Chronicle reporter and her family, who escaped to the wilds of the Minnesota-Canadian border, wrote back of "Too Much Air Here! Where Are Smog, Junk Foods, Ask Homesteading Urbanities".)

The sparse local reader response on health news is hinted by only three published inquiries to the Action Line ("Watchem") on elderly housing, medical insurance, and two brief letters to the editor both on dentistry--one on the high cost of tooth extractions; the other a response urging preventive endodontics instead! The closest health cartoon was of an aged couple offering to do dog food commercials for an advertising agency. (July 22) The only health editorial in the sample was on the firing-resignation of HEW Secretary Joseph Califano, called a "Tempest in a teapot a lesson in how the game is played in Washington." (July 26)

Relative to air pollution (the one local health topic on page one in the sample), an AP story from Chile on July 1, (Page 8) reported "Heavily Smogged City of Santiago Finally Gets The Attention of Government"; but a 22-inch story by Chronicle science writer Carlos Byars (July 26 on the obituary page) reported on a 3-year research program initiated by the Houston Chamber of Commerce. That "STUDY SAYS CLEAN-AIR RULES WILL COST HOUSTON BILLIONS, WON'T HELP HEALTH".

Conclusions/Recommendations

1) Although spectacular crises dominated the news of health in this study, the practice of preventive journalism in this limited sample may be slightly ahead of the advice and teaching tips in most journalism texts.

2) Outside contributions by health writers provided the bulk of "preventive health" information for readers in this newspaper study.

3) Standards for evaluating press performance and guides for teaching in this area are emerging.

4) Although the spectacular and odd and unusual dominated news of health, stories of more direct use to readers were not as rare as contended.

5) This newspaper might have used the prominence of page one more to give "preventive health" information, considering the crises of health reported in the press.

6) This newspaper might have made greater use of medical staff writers to produce local "preventive health" stories on Thursdays and Sundays during the critical month.

7) This study should be analyzed further by description of the non-preventive categories, the role of advertising, editorial page matter, and application of the other five suggested duties of a health writer beyond pragmatic advice about everyday health problems.

8) Other areas such as transportation, politics, economics, human relations, and related community functions might be further examined for evidence of preventive journalism practice.34

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